Preparing for Oral Presentations

A good oral presentation can only happen if you are well prepared!

Preparation

• Know your topic well! Brainstorm ideas and see where you need to fill in information. Do some research on these areas. Gather all your information together and then get it organized.
• Prepare an outline. You cannot ‘read’ your oral presentation, so do not write out an essay. Prepare your outline using bullets or number key points.
• Transfer your presentation to cue cards or a single sheet with bullet points. These should be an extra support for you. **DO NOT READ OFF OF YOUR CUE CARDS!**
• Be sure to know the expected length of time for your presentation and plan accordingly. A little bit longer is okay, but shorter is not.

Visuals

• Visual aids are a great way to present your information, but make sure they are a support for your spoken word and not a replacement for them. If you only flip through slides and not talk much, you won’t get a good grade, no matter how great your slides are.
• Visuals come in many different formats. Be creative! Other than PowerPoint slides, you can use posters, flip charts, hands-on samples, etc.
• Great visuals:
  o Are simple and uncluttered.
  o Are large enough to be seen from the back of the room
  o Don’t contain too much text.
  o Use colour and contrast but in moderation! Don’t use yellow or orange on your visual aid. These colours are difficult to see from a distance
• If you are using slides, a good rule of thumb is to have 1 slide for every 1-2 minutes of your presentation
• If you are providing a handout, be sure to put your name and title of the presentation on it. Provide a brief abstract (summary) of your presentation and make sure it is no more than 1-2 pages. You may also want to include a bibliography.

Practice Makes Perfect!

• You need to practice the presentation OUT LOUD! Practice while looking in a mirror is best. It allows you to be aware of how often you are looking down at your notes or at your visuals. It helps you practice looking up and making eye contact. Saying it out loud also gives you a good idea of how well you can speak about the information without looking at your notes.
• Time yourself! We all speak faster when we’re nervous. Expect your actual presentation to take a shorter amount of time than what you practiced. PowerPoint has a built in practice timer (under the Slide Show tab, select “Rehearse Timings”).